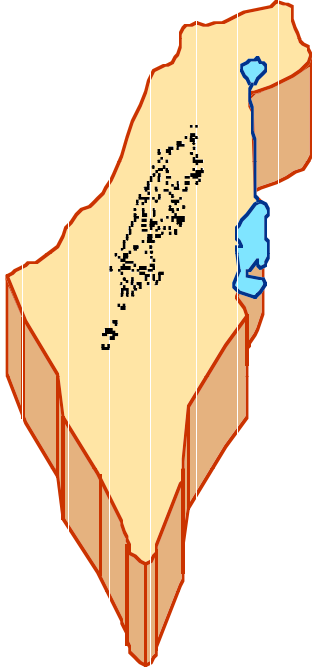


The Secrets of the Holy Land



Kabbalistic Insights into the Land of Israel and its Relationship to the Jewish People

Selections from

Sefer Hessed L'Avraham

by

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Translation and commentary

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Introduction

The Bible speaks predominantly about the covenantal relationship between the Jewish people and the land of Israel. Regardless of politics, old or new, as to which government controls the land, there remains a psychic connection between the land of Israel and the Jewish soul which cannot be duplicated by any other soul, people or nation.

From the following selections from Sefer Hessed L'Avraham of Rabbi Abraham Azulai, it will become clear that just as a soul is connected to its body in a unique and integral way which cannot be duplicated or counterfeited, so is there a unique bond between nations and the native lands that they inhabit. Just as there is a

spiritual force that binds soul to body, so does this same spiritual force bind a nation to its land. The connection between a nation and its land is an inherent force in nature. So regardless of politics or populations, somehow, in some way, indigenous peoples will always be drawn to their indigenous lands. For nowhere else will ever be called home.

To understand this relationship I must present here a short review on the makeup of the soul.

Each and every person has two levels of soul. One level is the individual level, which defines the person, is his name and personality. The second level of soul is the collective level which defines who and where the individual fits into the greater scheme. For example, I know that I am me. But what does "me" mean? I know my own identity, but my identity is not separate from a greater definition that goes beyond the boundaries of myself. All the

while that I am “me”, I am also a member of my people, my race, my sex. I share common characteristics to these groups, whether I like them or not, simply because that is who “I” am.

The source of collective identity is the level of the collective soul. The famous psychologist Carl Jung wrote much on the topic of collective soul (CW7, 240). He referred to it as the objective psyche and the collective unconscious. Yet, he was also quite adamant in distinguishing what he called the racial subdivisions of the collective unconscious. These are the “national” souls which is the collective level of soul underlying each of us.

The collective soul of the Jewish people is called in Kabbalistic literature the “Knesset Yisrael” (gathering of Israel). This collective Jewish soul is none other than the Shekhina, the holy Divine presence, and it is none other than the life force, cognizant spirit of the land of Israel. The soul of our land thus gives birth to the deepest levels of our individual souls and identities. In a way of speaking, the soul of the Land of Israel is the “mother” to the Jewish people.

Exile, i.e., removal from one’s homeland, therefore, is not simply a loss of one’s physical domicile, it is the cause that can lead to the loss of psychic identity. Exile breaks one’s connections with one’s home. By disconnecting the soul with the link that connects it to this physical world, one’s entire psychic identity is placed in jeopardy. Let there be no doubt, a soul’s connection to this

world is not only through the individual body it inhabits, it is also mainly through the spirit of the land in which the soul race belongs.

If not for a strong culture which imposes itself upon its peoples both psychologically and socially, such peoples will become forever lost unto themselves, always missing a piece of their psychic identities, never knowing where home truly is.

New homes are often created, such as a conglomerate nation like the United States. However, America’s history of racial prejudice and civil unrest manifests the difficulties of taking peoples from foreign shores and implanting them into a foreign culture. If not for the “little Italys” and “Chinatowns” which safeguard cultural cohesion, psychic loss of identity and the resulting social upheaval would be a lot worse than it presently is.

The following selections from Sefer Hesed L’Avraham explain the Jewish connection to the holy Land of Israel, which G-d numerous times in the Bible proclaimed as His gift to the Jewish people. In light of present day Middle East politics, where conflict and hatred run deep, I offer these selections to help explain why the Jewish soul is so connected to the holy land, and why any political solution that does not take this into account will never be a viable solution. Everyone has their own indigenous land. Arabs have theirs. Native Americans have theirs. Tibetans have theirs. Jews have theirs. This is the Divinely ordained pattern of things. For centuries many have lived in lands not theirs. This can be

acceptable as long as the collective unconscious of one's culture enables a nation a full expression of its internal archetypes. Yet, without this expression in full cultural, social and psychological manifestation, that nation will become collectively lost, leaving its members in a collective state of exile and depression. This collective psychic state manifests itself in the lowest forms of social and self abuse.

Heal the collective level of the soul and then the healing of the individual level can be addressed. Elevate the nation and the individual citizens will be elevated along with it. This appears to be the way of G-d.

One note about these translations: I have endeavored to make them as easy to read as is possible. From time to time I deleted minor sections where Rabbi Azulai deviated onto a tangent. He has a habit of making a quick reference to a related point, one which learned Torah scholars will recognize and understand, whereas the layman will not be familiar. In order to not confuse the reader, I have deleted these minor references.

Sefer Hesed L'Avraham

Ma'ayin 3, Nahar 7

Explaining how the holy rectification at all its levels is brought about by the Jewish people dwelling in the land of Israel.

“Know then that each and every parcel of land upon the earth [G-d specifically has given] to

specific national groups, as it is written (Deut. 2:9), “and to the children of Lot have I given Er as an inheritance.” Similar to this was Esau given Mt. Seir as our Sages have said (Ber. R. 16:12), [that Esau is] Edom and his land is [the land of] Edom. This shows us that there is a direct connection between a [parcel of] land and the people who dwell there. The reason for this is that the angelic prince who rules a [specific] people, also is the one who provides the [spiritual] sustenance to that specific [piece of] land.

Now the Torah and the land of Israel share a single connection (i.e., are from the same source). Similarly the Jewish people, without a doubt, share a single connection with the Holy Land, because of the [holy] connection of their souls.

The proof for this can be found in Ezek. 47, where it states [that G-d] divided the land of Israel among the twelve tribes and each and every tribe was bonded [to a specific] bordered [area of] land.

According to the [spiritual] source of each tribe thus was its dwelling. [This was so ordained so to] correspond to the boundaries from which each tribe emanates [in the spiritual realms]. [In this way each] can receive the supernal radiance [that it is destined to receive]. Also, all the mitzvot performed in the land of Israel they rise up and adorn each and every border according to the secret soul of each tribe. For the completion of the souls are like parts of the land, for the souls are subdivided throughout the land that they

deserve, corresponding to the supernal pattern above.

Just as the Shekhina is not complete all the while that the Holy Temple is not complete in its place, thus is the Shekhina not complete all the while that the land of Israel is not full at her borders [as promised to Abraham] from the river in Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates.

When the Jewish people are dwelling in their land, each in their allotted true portion as corresponds above [this correctly manifests the spiritual pattern]. Thus the Jewish people [themselves] are not [spiritually] complete all the while that they do not fill the entire land [according to the Biblically demarcated borders]. This then is the true completion. Then will the Shekhina be perfectly complete and rectified . . .

The throne of Glory will thus [also] be rectified, for it is not complete until the Shekhina above it and all that is below it are rectified.

Then will the land of Israel itself be rectified. For the rectification of the land of Israel comes about through the Shekhina which dwells in the land [in accordance to] the [spiritual] laws.

Being that the Shekhina has never properly dwelt in the land of Israel, even in the days of Joshua, due [to the fact] that two and a half tribes were not in the land, therefore, the land was not yet in its fullness. Also at that time [in the days of Mashiah], the Jewish people will rectify themselves when all of them are

together in the land of Israel. Then there will be great unity, when they are united twelve tribes [as one, united in] spirit and soul. This is the secret of the [twelve] permutations [of the holy Name YHWH] as I have explained elsewhere. There is no need to further elaborate.”

Ma'ayin 3, Nahar 9

To explain the difference between Divine Providence upon the Jewish people when they dwell in the land of Israel and when they do not.

“The matter is this, when Israel is in possession of their land this [itself] becomes the defense of every single Jew. For the essence of the Shekhina’s holiness is below with the Jewish people, as it is written (in Deut. 23:15), “for HaShem your G-d walks within the midst of your camp.”

The reason for this is that the air of the land of Israel is the holy domain of the Shekhina. Surrounding the borders of Israel, lie the klipot (the unclean husks). [They surround the Holy Land] and [actually] protect it so that the outside forces [of evil] should not enter in. [They surround the land] like a stretched out tent so that no stranger shall violate the boundaries. The walls and boundaries of this [spiritual] tent spreads out over the entire air [space] of the land of Israel reaching up to the opening to the [spiritual] Palace of Livnat Sapir (i.e., the passageway between the physical and spiritual dimensions), which is always open.

We thus find that[in] the atmosphere of the land of Israel resides the gateway to Heaven wherein which the angels of G-d ascend and descend, from the [spiritual] palaces] to the atmosphere and from the atmosphere to the land of Israel.

The Shekhina is also below (i.e., descends from Heaven) [to watch] over her children. She descends and hovers over them all day long [with only a small] spiritual divider separating them. This spiritual divider is the secret of the [klipot, which are referred to in Ezekiel's vision as the] storm wind, thick cloud and flashing fire. This are the secret of the atmosphere that is outside the land of Israel . . .

However, there is one klipah (husk) [that is not unclean] which safeguards everything so that the unclean [forces] will not be able to derive benefit from the holy Light. It is recorded in Ezekiel 1:4, "and a nogah (brilliance) surrounded it". It [the nogah] protected them (the children of Israel) on all sides, as has been explained.

Everything outside of the [holy] land [is under the dominion of] the storm wind, thick cloud and flashing fire. These are the "outside" (i.e., the dark) forces, the atmosphere of the lands of the "outside" nations.

This [then] is the secret [why] the Shekhina guards over Israel all by Herself, [but] only in the land of Israel. This is not the case outside the land (Heaven help us).

When the klipot seek to dominate the land of Israel, to destroy it, then does the Shekhina depart from the land and ascends above to the [spiritual] palaces and then afterwards the entry to the palace is sealed and closed. Then is permission given to breach the walls of Jerusalem, which are the "klipah nogah" (the brilliant husk) which separates [the good from the evil]. Then enters the nations who contaminate [everything], who send forth their hands upon the children of Israel and destroys all the physical chariots and exiles them.

The Shekhina runs after her children to see what is to be with them outside of [their] land . . . For being that her children are cast away, it is impossible for Her to let go of them. Therefore, [does the Shekhina] dwell in the lowest of chariots . . .

[And now] Her spark [of holiness that enlivens souls] and Her Divine guidance are cloaked within the angelic prince who is in charge of the land to which Israel has been exiled. For the ten [holy letters of G-d's Name] become encloaked within the ten unclean klipot, in order to reverse them [somewhat], so that they will not be completely evil to Israel and not contaminate Her children.

This can be compared to the [radiance] of the sun. Only a small element of its light reaches the earth. This is (symbolically speaking) how it is with the Shekhina. Her essence is in Heaven and only a small element of Her light goes outside the land of Israel along with the [children of] Israel, as it is written in Ezekiel 1:1, "I am among the exiles." It is not Her

essence (G-d forbid), but only the sparks of Her light, thus “did the Heavens open and I saw visions of G-d” (Ez. 1:1) . . .”

Ma'ayin 3, Nahar 12

Explaining the difference between those Jewish souls that dwell in the land of Israel and those who dwell outside of the Holy Land.

Introduction

As explained above, the relationship between a people and their land extends far beyond social and cultural boundaries. The soul of a people is in their land and their land is in their soul. When a Jew is in the land of Israel an aspect of his/her soul is opened, one that is unattainable anywhere other else than in the Holy Land.

This next selection explains this concept. It also makes a powerful point with regards to those **Jews who live in the land, yet are not Torah observant. They are still considered to be righteous**, all the while that their errors are committed unintentionally. Many modern Rabbis view the secular Jewish communities as “captive children”, a Rabbinic term used to describe people who are exempt from certain religious obligations due to the fact that they never had the opportunity to learn of their obligations. This selection enlightens us with regards to their status.

“Know then that the Jewish (neshamot) souls that dwell in the Land of Israel come forth from the ten sefirot of [the realm of] Yetzirah. [Thus, these souls] are called the “House of Israel”. They are also called “children”. For

when a Jewish person dwells outside the Holy Land then [all he/she] has is a (nefesh) soul from the [level of] the Ofanim (angels).

When one merits to enter into the Land of Israel there comes upon him/her a new (nefesh level) soul from Yetzirah and cloaks itself within his older (nefesh) soul.

The first night that one sleeps in the Land of Israel both souls leave [the body] and ascend above [to visit the Heavenly realms during the allotted sleep time]. Upon returning only the new soul returns.

Therefore, such a person is not fit to receive any punishments [for any sins committed outside of the Holy Land], for this, the new soul [which now inhabits the body] is not the one who sinned. Thus our blessed Rabbis have taught (Ketubot 111A) that such a one (i.e., one who lives in the holy Land) is forgiven all his sins.

[Thus] every Jewish person who lives in the Land of Israel is called a *tzadik* (righteous person), even if to all appearances one is not such. For if the person was not a *tzadik* (righteous person) the Land [itself] would vomit out such a person, as it is written, “*And the land shall vomit out those who dwell upon her*” (Lev. 18:25).

Being that the Land does not vomit out such a person, we must accept that he/she is a *tzadik* (righteous person) even if the person is considered a *rasha* (criminal person).

Also know that for one to live in the Land of Israel and then go to live outside the land is considered a sin. And this sin causes the angelic prince [of whatever land one goes to] to have dominance over him/her.

The one who takes upon him/herself to live all their days in the Land of Israel and not to leave to go outside the land is considered to have proclaimed the unity of the Holy One, blessed be He, all of one's days.

And know that the Land of Israel only atones for those sins which were performed by accident (without knowledge or intent). Yet, those sins performed intentionally (where one knows that what is being done is in violation of Torah law), these are not forgiven other than by personal sufferings.

For those [in the Holy Land] who perform intentional sins in a spirit of arrogance, these have no forgiveness other than through repentance and the study of Torah.”

Ma'ayin 3, Nahar 13

Explaining the secret of Jerusalem and the other holy places in the Land of Israel.

Introduction

Just as the human soul has its own internal ten sefirot, so does the land of Israel. This selection reveals the sefirotic origins and correlations of Israel's great cities.

“Know that the minor numerical value of [the word] Jerusalem is nineteen (19). Also, the

minor numerical value of [the word] Malkhut (kingdom) is nineteen.

[The city of] Shekhem, is the secret of Yosef, who corresponds to the sefirah Yesod. This is why Shekhem was given to Yosef [and his descendants) for his attribute is Yesod.

The minor numerical value of [the name of the city] Tiveria is nineteen. The sefirah Hod, along with the number of its three letters, plus one for the word also equals the minor numerical value nineteen (19).

The apparent meaning of the name Tiveria is “*the center of the land*”, (ref. Megilah 6A), for the land hints to [the sefirah] Malkhut, and Tiveria refers to [the sefirah] Hod. Also, [if the word Tiveria is broken into two we find] the minor numerical value of Tiver is thirteen (13), because it receives power from the thirteen (13) supernal attributes [of mercy].

Tzfat refers to [the sefirah] Netzah, whose minor numerical value is twenty-two (22, adding the value of one for the word itself). Now, the minor numerical value of [the word] Tzfat is equal [to the numerical value] of [the holy Name] Ehyeh (EHYH).

This is a reference to [the fact] that those who dwell there [in Tzfat] are dealt with [by G-d] with the thirteen attributes [of mercy] which come forth from [the sefirah] Keter. [The Name] Ehyeh corresponds to Keter, therefore is Tzfat one of the cities of refuge to safeguard souls.

Tzfat's [minor numerical value] is 21. Adding [the value of] one [to include the word itself] is 22. This corresponds to the 22 letters in the Torah. This is a hint that Tzfat is ready and prepared to be [that place] where the deep secrets of the Torah are perceived. For there is no better and more purer air in all Israel like there is in Tzfat.

The numerical value [of the word] Netzah (the sefirah) is [148, which is also the numerical value of the word] "*kemah*" (flour). This then is the secret behind the words of the Sages, "*if there is no flour, there is no Torah.*" (Avot 3:17).

Meron corresponds to [the sefirah Tiferet]. Now the Aramaic translation of the word "sheep" is "*meroni*". This is a similar term [to the word] "*maran*" (lord), as in "*L-rd of Heaven*", which is an appellation to Tiferet.

This is also the meaning of the verse in Ezekiel 34:31, [G-d says to Israel], "*you are my sheep, the sheep that I shepherd, mankind you are.*"

Now, "*maran*", which is the attribute of Tiferet, in minor numerical value is equal to [the minor numerical value of the word] "*emet*" (truth) which is 9. Add the value of three, one for each of the letters and an additional one for the value of the word itself and we have 13, a reference to the 13 attributes of mercy, as explained above.

It is already well known that the cave of Makhpelah in Hebron, which is the burial site of the Patriarchs, is the entrance way to the

subterranean Garden of Eden. [This is hinted to in the Biblical account of Abraham's purchase of the cave (Gen. 23:16), when he paid an amount of money that was] "*o'vair l'so'hahr*" (negotiable currency) . These words are numerically equal to the phrase, "*orah l'gan*" (the path to the Garden). It is also the numerical value of the word "*hatzer*" (courtyard), to suggest that the cave is to the Garden of Eden as a courtyard is to a home.

[The words] "*o'vair l'so'hahr*" (negotiable currency) have the numerical value of 570, to hint to us that everyone who lives in Hebron is certain that when he/she dies and is buried, their soul will merit to enter directly into the subterranean Garden of Eden without delay, without any trouble or difficulty.

Now the word, "*teka*" (to insert) is referred to twice in the Torah. The first time is Gen. 31:25, "*and Jacob had pitched (teka) his tent on the mount.*" The second [continues the verse], "*and Laban along with with his brethren, pitched his tent on the mount of Gil'ad*".

[This verse] "*Jacob had pitched (teka) his tent*" refers to his wife. "*On the mount*" refers to the cave of Makhpelah which are two mountains one on top of another, and the two caves are under the lower mountain and there are two caves in the upper mountain.

The word "*teka*" is numerically equal the the phrase "*o'vair l'so'hahr*", meaning that the cave of Makhpelah is the pathway to the Garden of Eden. With regards to this did our

father Jacob, upon him be peace, pray to blessed G-d with all his heart that he should merit to be buried with them in the cave of Makhpelah, he and his wife together. For thus has it been ordained since the six days of creation.

“And Laban along with with his brethren, pitched his tent.” The meaning of this is that Laban intended, through the powers of black magic, to tear out Jacob from [the world] so that he would not be buried in the cave of Makhpelah. [Laban] wanted to kill [Jacob], *“along with with his brethren,”* who are Esau and Yishmael. For they would then take the burial site [for themselves], and control the passageway through the cave to the Garden of Eden. For Yishmael and his sons and the children of Keturah already knew that they had a portion in our father Abraham, upon him be peace.

Esau and his minions had their portion in our father Isaac, upon him be peace.

If, G-d forbid, our father Jacob, upon him be peace, would not be buried in the cave of Makhpelah, then absolutely no Jew would be able to go through that passage into the Garden of Eden. [The path would be blocked by the] idolatrous nations who cling to Yishmael and Esau, who would enter therein and control the passageway due to their connections to Abraham and Isaac who are already buried there in Makhpelah cave.

This is what our Sages of blessed memory were referring to in the Passover Hagadah when they

said that Laban attempted to uproot everything, as it is written in Deut. 26:5, *“an Aramean nomad was our father.”*

For this same [reason] when [the dark angel] Samael fought with Jacob that he *“touched (teka) the hollow of his thigh”* (Gen. 32:26).

Now, Samael’s intent was to blemish Jacob so that he would not be buried in the cave along side of Abraham and Isaac. Instead [he wanted that] Esau and his wife should be buried there.

[Thank G-d] this did not happen, for [our] blessed G-d immediately healed [Jacob] as our holy Sages have said (ref. Shab. 33b), that Jacob came complete [i.e. returned to his father Isaac]; complete meaning, complete in his body (i.e., not blemished).

Blessed G-d in His grace and abundant mercy thwarted Samael’s [evil] intentions and placed Jacob in a place of faith, the cave to which we are referring. Now his descendants can travel the path to the Garden of Eden.

Tzfat, also has the numerical value of 570. This is to hint that those who dwell in Tzfat have a [special] benefit more than any other city in the land of Israel. Because [Tzfat] is of such a high elevation and the air there is more pure and refined than any other city in the land of Israel, therefore, one who dies there and is buried there his soul will immediately travel [directly] to the Makhpelah cave in order to travel from there to the subterranean Garden of Eden. There is no reason to expand on this more.”

Ma'ayin 3, Nahar 14

Explaining the blemish that occurs to one who leaves the land of Israel to outside the land.

“Know, that the one who leaves the land of Israel to outside the land, on the condition to return quickly, so much so that he leaves behind his wife and children in Israel, this type of person will not lose his Yetziratic soul. However, his is cloaked in another nefesh [level soul] from [the] Asiyatic [realm]. Therefore, such a person is required to observe [Jewish] holidays outside the land in the same way as he would inside the land; [all this] because his intent is [clearly] to return.

All this [reception of the lower Asiyatic soul] is for his own good. For if he were not cloaked in an Asiyatic soul, the klipot (forces of darkness) would come to cling to his Yetziratic soul and immediately it would become unclean [because of them]. Therefore, what did G-d, the merciful and compassionate do? He cloaks the Yetziratic soul in an Asiyatic soul so that the klipot (forces of darkness) will not defile it. And all klipot attach themselves [to us] according [to the level of uncleanliness] of each individual place.

Now, all this [which I have just said] refers [only] to the one who is born in the land of Israel. However, one who is born outside the land and comes to live in the land permanently, immediately when he comes close to the ladder, the klipot (forces of darkness) are removed from him and he enters into the [holy] Land only with the Asiyatic soul. Then the

Yetziratic soul enters within his Asiyatic soul, like a knife in a sheath.

When such a person later returns to live outside of the land of Israel, his new soul from Yetzirah remains in Israel and only the old Asiyatic soul goes with him to become unwrapped within the klipot (dark forces).

Know that one who comes to the land of Israel for only a temporary period, immediately when such a one approaches the ladder, his klipot are removed and all that enters into the land of Israel is his Asiyatic soul. However, such a one does not receive a Yetziratic soul, because he has no intentions of remaining in the land of Israel in any permanent fashion. Therefore, such a person must observe [the Jewish] holidays as they do outside the land.”